

Researchers at the Northwestern University Center of Cancer Nanotechnology Excellence are studying the ways in which cancer cells migrate from existing tumors to create new, metastatic tumors in different regions of the body. By creating micrometer scaled adhesive islands on gold surfaces, they have allowed individual metastatic cells to take on shapes such as the star depicted above. These shapes provide cues to cancer cells, which respond in the above image by concentrating their motility machinery at the star's tips. This assay lends itself to large scale screening of cell populations—a problem that has stymied past efforts to find a drug that targets metastatic motility.

Credit: Bartosz Grzybowski, PhD.

NCI Alliance for Nanotechnology in Cancer

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